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CINEPLEX ODEON BUYING PLITT CIRCUIT

Lumet Tries Out Computerized Editing On Latest Pic, 'Power'

By DAN GILROY

A computerized editing process getting its first feature film tryout in Gotham on the postproduction of Sidney Lumet's "Power" allows an editor to arrange, rearrange and view footage almost instantaneously by eliminating the laborious job of splicing film in the assembling of work prints.

The Montage picture processor being used on "Power" is manufactured by Mass.-based Montage Corp., a privately held company with majority interest held by Interscope Investments, majority owner of Panavision.

The system was developed approximately two years ago and has been used primarily in episodic tv, video, commercials and industrials postproduction. Some 20 such machines are currently in use in editing and video houses around the country.

The jump to features came after Lumet and "Power" editor Andy Mondshein, editor on "Desperately Seeking Susan" and "Garbo Talks," received a demonstration at Unitel, a Manhattan video house, and opted to use it on the film.

"Because we were experimenting with it," Lumet explained, "they arranged for us to use it on a trial basis. The machine is marvelous; the few corrections we needed were able to be programmed in while we were working."

First step in using the process on "Power" was transferring footage to videotape. Fed into the Montage in four-hour loads, maximum the system can currently store, the tape is automatically duplicated into 17 copies on racks of computer-controlled Beta HiFi-format slaves. The large number of copies allow almost instant access to any frame stored.

The transferred footage is referenced by computer with a SMPTE time code, with the editor now working on the self-contained machine in front of a bank of preview screens.

Cutting is done at the editor's indication by computer with unprecedented speed and flexibility.

"The process is far less physically demanding," Lumet stated, "the director doesn't have to wait around for the splice. Basically the entire day can be devoted to the editing process instead of the splicing process. You're not dealing with adding or taking off one or two frames from the physical splicing point of view."

Mondshein concurred, "It's a milestone in editing technology, and perhaps the biggest change in film editing since the Moviola was introduced.

"With this system I found that at the end of a 12 or 14 hour day I was much less fatigued than I would have been had we been working in film."

Film editing at present is a process little changed since the medium began. An average feature film requires thousands of individual splices to assemble a workprint, a change in any one of which can send an assistant or apprentice searching for a "trim," the footage immediately preceding or following a cut.

The computerized editing process

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Loews Accommodating

Shortly after getting out of the exhibition business, Loews Corp. has decided to expand Loews Hotels' hospitality program for other parts of the film industry.

With the cooperation of the N.Y. Mayor's Office of Film, Theater and Broadcasting, Loews' Summit and Regency hotels in New York City are offering accommodations tailored to locationing productions, from top execs and talent to extras and visiting production personnel.

Loews Hotels said it would coordinate food service with a company's production plans, and also provide a gratis production headquarters suite for companies booking at least 20 sleeping rooms.

Paramount To Hold Brainstorming Sesh For Local Ad Shops

Hollywood, Aug. 20.

Campaign strategy for seven upcoming Paramount feature releases will be fine-tuned when the studio convenes a convention of 45 local and regional ad agencies from the U.S. and Canada Wednesday (21)-Friday at the Le Mondrian Hotel.

The informal brainstorming session will be moderated by Buffy Shutt, Paramount executive v.p. of marketing, Kathy Jones, senior v.p. of publicity and promotion, and Tom Campanella, senior v.p. of national advertising.

Also participating will be Para-

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CANADIAN EXHIB PAYING $132-MIL

By WILL TUSHER

Hollywood, Aug. 20.

Toronto-based Cineplex Odeon is paying $65,000,000 for the purchase of the Plitt Theater Circuit, and is assuming Plitt's indebtedness of $62,000,000, plus an estimated $5,000,000 more in mortgages and other commitments.

Cineplex Odeon takes over active operation of the Plitt chain Nov. 22, scheduled date of the closing. Exiting Plitt chairman Henry Plitt has agreed to serve five years as a salaried consultant. However, the focus of his subsequent activity will be as cochairman of Showscan Film Corp., soon to be based in Culver City.

Purchase by Cineplex Odeon of 100% of the stock of Plitt is being effected with a combination of cash, notes and real estate. Included in the latter, Plitt disclosed, is The Chicago Theater in the city of that name — a property over which Plitt had been engaged in a long-running tussle.

"That single property," Plitt said, "is worth $14,000,000.

He said remaining real estate changing hands in the sale is scattered over various parts of the United States, none in Canada.

Cineplex president and chief operating officer Garth Drabinsky, in a telephone interview from his Toronto headquarters, said the combined U.S. and Canadian circuits will total close to 1,100 screens. He calculated that will represent more locations than General Cinema, largest circuit in North America, and a tossup of either 1%

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Gore & Cohen's White Cap Prods. In Fox Musical Development Deal

'Kelly' In Schenectady

Schenectady, Aug. 20.

The east coast premiere showing of the Erich Von Stroheim/Gloria Swanson 1928 "Queen Kelly," as restored and reconstructed by Kino Intl., will be presented Aug. 27 by Proctor's Theater, the 60-year-old former movie palace that now claims to have the largest indoor movie screen in the east outside of Radio City Music Hall.

"Kelly" is part of Proctor's summer film festival which last month offered the east coast premiere of the Chinese "River Without Buoys."

RKO Century Chain Completes Buy Of Cinema 5 Screens

As previously forecast (*Variety*, May 15), RKO Century Warner Theaters, a division of the Almi Group, has acquired the 13-theater Cinema 5 Ltd. chain in Manhattan. No purchase price was disclosed by Almi cochairmen Michael Landes and Albert Schwartz.

Almi said Cinema 5 v.p./g.m. Ralph E. Donnelly will be retained and upped to the position of prexy for the Cinema 5 Theaters division.

Almi stressed that "RKO plans to retain the existing selective film policy of the theaters and cater to the sophisticated" tastes of Manhattan filmgoers ... The Cinema 5 houses long have had a reputation for screening prestigious foreign and in-

(Continued on page 14)

Film score composer Michael Gore and screenwriter Lawrence D. Cohen have inked a two-year exclusive production pact with 20th Century Fox for the development of feature musicals.

The deal with duo's Gotham-centered White Cap Prods. reportedly marks the studio's maiden production presence here.

"As Fox' first overall producers to be based in New York, we will be developing many kinds of pictures," Gore said, "but the emphasis on Fox' part and ours will be film musicals."

Calling today's musical cinema "haphazard" and designed for record advertising, Gore and Cohen plan to develop musicals for Fox along the lines of the Arthur Freed unit at MGM, a combine that yielded pics like "Singin' In The Rain."

Fox' deal with White Cap had been in the works for just the past couple of weeks, and "it was initiated tremendously by Mr. Diller and Lawrence Gordon," Cohen said, referring to the major's chairman/chief exec officer and prez/chief operating officer.

Speaking for the Fox execs, Gore said, "We all believe there's a huge audience waiting and hungering for true musical entertainment in movies. We'll work in the tradition whereby music and dance are an emotional and organic part of character and story development."

"Fame" Glory

Gore won two Oscars for "Fame" (for the title song as well as the score), and was nominated for his score of "Terms Of Endearment." He said the musical numbers in "Fame" were "conceived, developed and recorded in preproduction" with "strong collaboration" with the director and screenwriter.

Cohen wrote the screenplays for "Carrie" and "Ghost Story." He worked for Broadway producer Michael Bennett on "Twigs" and "Seesaw." He added that he found the script for and served as production exec on "Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore." Cohen and Gore met nine years ago and have been in business together the last four.

White Cap is still working on projects conceived prior to the Fox agreement. Cohen said a director and choreographer will soon be revealed for a large-scale stage musical based on Stephen King's "Carrie." With book by Cohen, music by Gore and lyrics by Dean Pitchford ("Footloose"), "Carrie" is being readied for production late next spring.

Also, the pair are moving ahead with development of four projects based on novels. Cohen said his first draft script for "A Mother And Two Daughters" was just handed in to Walt Disney Prods. Gail Godwin wrote the novel.

Cohen also wrote the script for Dan McCall's "Jack The Bear," which will be directed by Bob Rafelson. The 1974 novel is comedy-drama set in Oakland, Calif., and concerns a father and son's rite of passage.

Cohen said he'll also script one of two thrillers in White Cap's stable, either Gary Devon's first novel, "Finding Them Lost," or John Farris' "Sharp Practice." "Finding

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Music Motions Scrambles To Get 'Streets' Clip Into Sites For Aid To Africa

By JIM ROBBINS

In a bid to sustain the flow of funds to famine-stricken Africa, Mick Jagger, David Bowie and a phalanx of corporate partners are scrambling to get a film of the singers' cover of "Dancing In The Streets" on to nearly a quarter of the nation's theater screens for unspooling ahead of major features this month and next.

Eastman Kodak is footing the bill for distribution of 5,000 prints of the superstars' collaboration, rarely seen since clip's July 13 Live Aid broadcast. Music Motions, N.Y.-based disseminator of musical short films to exhibitors, is handling the actual (and monumental) mechanics of the special release with a lot of help from Federal Express.

"It's a logistical nightmare," said Pam Henning, ad-promo v.p. for Music Motions.

Distribution is thorny in part because the clip is available in flat or Cinemascope format, and in Dolby or mono sound. An invoice accompanies each print so that Kodak's ultimate bill can be calculated. No one is saying how much the corporation has pledged, but the amount is reportedly in the six figures.

As of Friday (16), the day EMI America Records released the official single of the Jagger-Bowie opus (remixed after the Live Aid version, which has been picked up by radio stations, illicitly), Music Motions has received scores of yeses, nos and maybes from major and indie theater circuits.

What exhibs are being offered is a re-edited version of "Dancing In The Streets," codirected by Bowie and David Mallet. It's about three minutes long with an introductory sequence of (Kodak) stills from the Live Aid event. Gotham d.j. Scott Muni's narration also concludes the clip with a phone number (1-800-LIVE-AID) to facilitate donations. No in-theater collections are to be made.

Free Thru Sept.

Available free through September, "Dancing In The Streets" with the Music Motions/Kodak/Muni wraparound will be shown in front of 14 major commercial features such as "Back To The Future," "Best Of Times," "Summer Rental," "Year Of The Dragon" and "Ghostbusters" reissue. Clip-generated sales of the single are of course earmarked for Live Aid.

Circle Theaters in Washington, D.C., getting the jump on showing the "DITS" film, premiered eight flat and Dolby prints in its suburban D.C. houses before the leggy "Back To The Future." That was Friday (16), and Music Motions' staggered release pattern will put the Jagger-Bowie act into other theaters starting Friday (23) and then Aug. 30.

By far the largest support for the multi-faceted drive is coming from Plitt Theaters, the recently sold, fourth largest theater circuit that is taking "DITS" for all of its 600-odd screens. More than 100 prints are being sent to each of these circuits: Cinemette, Cinema Centers, Marcus, Stewart and Everett, Syufy, and Commonwealth.

Larry Moyer, Budco, Consolidated and Fox Theater Management, as well as Circle, have committed.

"I cannot exceed 5,000 prints at the max," said Denise Battaglia, sales and marketing v.p. for Music Motions. "I will have very close to that, I know I'm over 3,000 now and I still have a couple more days to book."

Circuits whose involvement in the charity effort is still up in the air include United Artists, American Multi-Cinema, Redstone, RKO

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RKO Pictures Projects

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U.S. Pic, which stars John Lithgow and Jodie Foster and was written and directed by Michael Laughlin, will be handled in foreign markets by Thorn EMI. Both the Fletcher Challenge and the Rothchild deals represent the first long-term motion picture ventures for the two foreign companies.

Not A New Route

As for RKO Pictures, coproduction route is not new but concentration on the international market is. Company announced a return to filmmaking in 1979 after a 23-year layoff and proceeded to coproduce "Carbon Copy" with Hemdale, which proved to be a box-office flop.

Following that, RKO entered into a partnership with Universal Pictures in 1980 with a $100,000,000 RKO settlement fund from a suit by Universal over remake rights to "King Kong." Produced under this pact were "The Border," "Cat People," "The Best Little Whorehouse In Texas," "D.C. Cab" and "Streets Of Fire." "Whorehouse" was the only picture of the bunch to profit at the boxoffice.

Company's latest interest in motion picture production marks its fourth foray into the film biz. Least successful was the 1966 attempt which yielded no films but was kept alive by licensing remake rights to its tremendous library of features.

According to Seiler, RKO's return to production indicates a belief in major growth for the offshore markets. Countering the general downbeat attitude towards the foreign market caused by the inordinate strength of the dollar and other exhibition problems overseas, Seiler predicted a turnaround in foreign business which could result in a "reshuffling of the same deck of cards." (Current estimates have slipped to as low as 80-20 domestic-foreign split for theatrical take, compared to 1984's approximate split of 70-30 and a historical split of 67-33).

Seiler forecast a "rapid decrease" in the dominance of the U.S. market based on the growth of foreign pay tv, cable and direct broadcast satellites as well as upgrading and surburbanizing of European theaters.

With expected growth overseas, company has elected to develop software rather than delivery systems, commented RKO General president Shane O'Neil, adding that was the thinking behind the recent sale of cable interests to Capital Cities.

Emphasis on the foreign market will entail lensing abroad, thereby benefitting from the strong dollar and turning the foreign currency situation to the company's advantage, noted Seiler. Company already has invested in two London-lensed pictures with Edward Pressman Prods., "Plenty" and the currently filming "Half Moon Street."

Seiler commented that the $10,000,000 "Plenty," which stars Meryl Streep and is due out this fall from 20th Century Fox domestically and Thorn EMI foreign, couldn't have been done in the U.S. at that price. "The edge is shooting offshore and allows us to compete on a cost basis. If we can't make a film for 70% of what it would cost in the U.S. we won't make it," Seiler said.

Other foreign link for RKO is a deal with the Mexican government for a minimum of two years for the use of the eight sound stages at the Churubusco Studios in Mexico City. "We needed the facilities to be able to make any kind of picture. Mexican productions are an important part of our future plans," said Seiler.

Under the terms of the pact, the Mexican government will supply personnel to operate the studio; in return, RKO will help to market the facilities. Although RKO will bring in most of the technical people, some Mexican crew members will be employed for anticipated feature and possibly some tv activity. RKO will lease the space when it is not using it for its own productions.

First RKO production to utilize the Churubusco facilities is another joint venture with Pressman, "Masters Of The Universe." Although RKO will covering the initial costs of the $22,000,000 picture, company philosophy is to limit its investment through presales or distribution advances. Seiler suggested that average budget for RKO films will be $7,500,000, with its share of the budget coming to roughly half.

Rights Sales

Seiler noted that about 20-30% of a film's costs could normally be covered by preselling all foreign rights, with another 25% for U.S. homevideo rights and something less than 20% for sale to U.S. pay tv. Foreign sales will be handled on a picture-by-picture basis by RKO, which plans appearances at film markets where necessary.

Adding that RKO has the cash flow to initially back any production, Seiler said company is taking a conservative approach and will not take full risk of a picture.

Suggesting a company position antithetical to the founders of the film industry who went on gut instinct in deciding to make a picture, Seiler advanced a more corporate approach. "We want to make aesthetically good and commercially viable films. We're investing the stockholders' money and if an advance isn't forthcoming for a film, maybe the project isn't right."

Initially, projects will come from outside producers who bring ideas to RKO, but Seiler expects to generate in-house projects in the near future with the recent addition of several production execs. Seiler said RKO would apply "unique criteria" to what it chooses to produce, taking into account quality and budgetary considerations.

Seiler is currently in discussion with several U.S. majors about a domestic distribution deal, but maintained that such would not be a simple output deal but a non-exclusive, picture-by-picture arrangement with prearranged terms based on the budget of the film.

"That way a distributor is not forced to handle a film that it really doesn't want or can't support," Seiler said.

'Streets' Clip

(Continued from page 7)

Century Warner, Loews, Sameric, Carisch, and Gulf States.

Definite "nos" were voiced by General Cinema, Martin, Mann, Pacific, and Kerasotes.

Battalgia also said over 400 independent theaterowners have been enlisted.

As Freeman Fisher of Circle Theaters noted, there's a lot of legwork involved for the theaterowners to get the clips on screen, but "I think this is an opportunity exhibition should jump on. It's so different."

Fisher, like advertising/promo execs at all participating circuits, also received one-sheets, ad slicks and other promotional tools to tell the public in whatever market what theater is playing the clip, or Music Zap, in Music Motions' terminology.

In addition to Jagger and Bowie's respective management firms (M.P.J. and Isolar), and aforementioned entities, the media and theater blitz is being abetted by Rogers & Cowan, CBS Records, Jobete Music, Technicolor, and J. Walter Thompson.

Another major player is West Nally Inc., an international marketing firm for various special events. Firm secured Kodak and AT&T's initial Live Aid sponsorship and it's planning similar drives to get the charity film into theaters in Canada, U.K., France and other territories.

Producer of "DITS," filmed in London (in just 24 hours, per Rogers & Cowan's Joe Dera), was Jaqui Byford. Mark Mendes Da Costa and Nick Morris edited the film. John Metcalfe was the cameraman, while assistant director was Barry Wasserman.

Gale Sondergaard Dies

(Continued from page 4)

"Faust, Part I" and "Major Barbara" before taking over for Judith Anderson in "Strange Interlude."

In 1930 she divorced her first husband, Neil O'Malley, and married Theater Guild actor-director Herbert Biberman. She acted in some of his productions, including "Karl And Anna" and "Red Dust," and they worked together on the ABC radio show, "Legend Of America."

After she appeared in the plays "Alison's House," "American Dream," "Doctor Monica" and "Invitation to A Murder," Biberman signed a contract with Columbia Pictures and the couple moved to Hollywood in 1934.

Unconvinced she could make it as a screen actress, Sondergaard was persuaded to meet "Anthony Adverse" director Mervyn LeRoy, who instantly cast her in the film.

In short order, she had roles in "Maid Of Salem," "Seventh Heaven," "The Life Of Emile Zola," "Lord Jeff," "Dramatic School," "Never Say Die," "Juarez," "The Cat And The Canary," "The Llano Kid," "The Blue Bird" and "The Mark Of Zorro."

She received considerable attention for her work as the Eurasian wife in "The Letter" with Bette Davis in 1940, and that same year returned to Broadway in "Cue For Passion."

Universal Contract

In 1941 she signed a contract with Universal and made 14 films there through 1947, including "The Black Cat," "The Strange Death Of Adolf Hitler," "The Spider Woman," (in which she played the title role), "Follow The Boys," "Christmas Holiday," "The Climax," "The Spider Woman Strikes Back," "A Night In Paradise" and "The Time Of Their Lives" with Abbott & Costello.

On loan-out she appeared with Bob Hope in "My Favorite Blonde" and "Road To Rio," as well as in "A Night To Remember," "Appointment In Berlin," "Isle Of Forgotten Sins" and the 1946 "Anna And The King Of Siam," for which she won her second Oscar nomination as best supporting actress.

In 1947, Biberman became one of the Hollywood 10 and Sondergaard, who was politically active herself, was blacklisted. After playing a small part in LeRoy's 1949 picture "East Side, West Side," she didn't appear in another film for 20 years.

She spent several years raising her adopted children, Joan and Daniel, acted in some stock theater productions and, from 1956-1958, toured in a dramatic one-woman show, "Woman." In 1965, she brought the show to New York.

After debuting on television on "It Takes A Thief" in 1969, she later appeared on such shows as "Get Smart," "The Bold Ones," "Night Gallery," "Medical Center," the telefilm "The Cat Creature," and the miniseries "Centennial."

She was also in films "Comeback," "Pleasantville," "Echoes," "Hollywood Horror House" and "Return Of A Man Called Horse," and in stage productions of "The Crucible," "John Gabriel Borkman" and "Goodbye Fidel."

New Century Credit

(Continued from page 3)

cently completed "The Blue Man" in a joint venture with Filmline Intl. Canada.

New Century board chairman Samuel Schulman said, "The availability of this financing will allow us to expand our business activity including the production of motion pictures and possible acquisitions of film libraries for our television syndication subsidiary, New Century Telecommunications."

Christopher Morahan's "Clockwise," toplining **John Cleese**, has completed lensing for Thorn EMI.

Inquirer seeks copy of 1947 movie "For You I Die". Contact Box V7241, Variety 154 W. 46st NY, NY 10036.

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